DEATH VALLEY 49ERS KEEPSAKE

No. 28

Dr. Samuel Gregg GEORGE

Death Valley Explorer of 1860-61

JOSEPH E. DOCTOR

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† Died during term in office
* Deceased

Special Thanks to '49er Advisor Gentry Mayfield of Laguna Beach for restoration of the centerfold portrait. Cover Illustration by Jean Pickard.

Dr. Samuel Gregg

GEORGE

Death Valley
Explorer *of*
1860-61

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Keepsake Number 28

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Joseph E. Doctor

Dr. Samuel Gregg GEORGE

Death Valley Explorer *of* 1860-61

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Edited by
Ken Lengner, Jean Pickard and Danny Ray Thomas

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Inyo County, California ca. 1872-1873, by Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902) (public domain)

DR. SAMUEL GREGG GEORGE

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William Lewis Manly made himself a firm place in western history for his rescue-with his rugged partner, John Rogers-of the Bennett-Arcan party from Death Valley in 1850. Manly was to return to Death Valley and was himself rescued, with his companion, Charles Alvord. The two were afoot and foodless, except for rabbits Manly shot. They had been abandoned in the desert by the man whose family he had once saved, Asabel Bennett.

Dr. Samuel Gregg George came along at that old Jayhawker stopping place, Indian Wells, found Manly and Alvord who had an abscess on his thigh, fed them and took them back to Kingville, † with Alvord mounted on Dr. George's horse.

Dr. George was notable in Death Valley history for other than the succoring of Manly and Alvord. Another Physician, Dr. Erasmus Darwin French,* was the first-ten years after his brief visit to the Panamints in 1850-to return in 1860 to look for the elusive Lost Gunsight lead. His party arrived at Furnace Creek in July and because of the oppressive heat did not remain long enough to do any serious prospecting. Dr. George followed French by several months, and in October he was on the old camps of the '49ers. The weather was decent enough for a man from Visalia, whose desert wisdom dated from his experience in Mexico in the war with that country.

He explored and named Wildrose Spring and Canyon. One of his

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†Kingsville, reportedly a traveler's stopping point located near the present-day community of Olancha in Owens Valley, was-appropriately enough-operated by a man named King. Historical rumor (or is it fact?) shows that King developed a most unsavory reputation and paid for his transgressions by being the second man "officially" hanged in the county of Tulare.

*See *Dr. E. Darwin French's Explorations of Death Valley*, the 22nd Keepsake (1982) of the Death Valley '49ers, Inc., also authored by Joseph E. Doctor.

party, durable William T. Henderson, climbed and named Telescope Peak. George's name attached itself to Indian George, his guide into the Panamints. Dr. George filed the first valid mining claim in the Panamint Mountains and discovered the first paydirt in what is now the Death Valley National Monument, although it did not pay off in his lifetime. Dr. George made several trips into the Coso country after 1860, and became so prominent in what is now Inyo County that when the county was formed, he was requested to serve as the first judge there, a position he declined.

He became known not only as a physician and a prospector, but was a devoted patriot. During the Civil War he kept Union military authority informed on the activities of the secessionists in Tulare County, where they maintained a stronghold, as well as in the Kern River and Coso mining areas. Many a "secesh" fled there from California's loyal centers to keep from taking the oath of allegiance which was so repulsive to them.

According to his military record, Samuel Gregg George was born in Kent County, Ohio, in 1814. At an early age he took up the study of dentistry that he might earn money to study for a career as a physician and surgeon. Sardis Templeton, who was his step-grandson, knew Dr. George as an old man, and from him learned that he rode a regular circuit in Ohio, pulling and filling teeth. He had a handsome kit of ivory handled forceps and other instruments which were later exhibited at state dental society meetings by a prominent Fresno dentist. "Any tooth he got hold of with those instruments would surely come out," said Templeton.

At the age of 32, June 4, 1846, Dr. George enlisted in the army for the war with Mexico, possibly with the idea of obtaining experience in medicine and surgery. He was mustered into Captain Ramsey's Company K, First Ohio Volunteer Infantry, and became a hospital steward, which was the rank he held at his discharge for disability in October of the following year. His military experience was far from pleasant. He was close to the action in the sharp battles of Buena Vista and Monterey. In later years he spoke of the crushing wounds of limbs caused by the

Telescope Peak (11,049 feet in elevation) affords a spectacular view of Death Valley and the surrounding region. William T. Henderson, a member of Dr. George's expedition, is credited with naming the mountain when he first climbed it in 1861. (NPS Photo)

inadequacy of Mexican powder to push cannonballs with sufficient force to sever arms and legs cleanly. The surgeon had to remove them. Dr. George told his grandson that the treatment was indeed primitive. Some laudanum was available but it was reserved for officers who required amputation or other surgery. An enlisted man who had to have an arm or leg amputated was strapped to a log and given a large drink of whiskey or brandy, and the surgeon sawed away.

After the war Dr. George returned to his Ohio home, but was among the first to cross the Plains in the 1849 Gold Rush. Sardis Templeton believed he may have done fairly well in the mines, as by the early 1850's he was able to sustain himself as a student in the College of Physicians and Surgeons in San Francisco. Many years later when Templeton was a teenager living with his parents in San Francisco, his grandmother and her husband came to visit. Templeton said that his step-grandfather was welcomed as an old grad at the college, and that he showed his family places to which he had gone with Lola Montez, the famous actress who had been concubine to a king in Europe. Dr. George was a handsome man and was said to have enjoyed Lola's sweetest smiles. He may have even been able to bring her the golden favors she so much enjoyed.

Dr. George bought land near Visalia in Tulare County in 1854 and moved there in 1855. Presumably he brought a wife, Clara, with him. She died in a few years and is buried in the Visalia Cemetery. She left him a son who grew up to be a trouble-maker, and at an early age he went off to Mexico. Dr. George went to Mexico to visit his son but had little to say about his experience there, at least to his family. Later, the son was killed in a quarrel said to have resulted from gambling.

In the little frontier county seat of Visalia the doctor quickly became prominent, and may have been the best of three physicians there who hung out their shingles. He was appointed county surveyor at the first meeting of the board of supervisors which succeeded the earlier court of sessions. He was also the first county physician. When trouble with The Yokuts and Western

Mono Indians broke out in 1856, Dr. George wrote letters to the governor, describing the situation as serious and asking him to permit the state militia to intervene. When a militia was formed and engaged in combat with Indians on the Tule River in 1856, Dr. George was listed as the surgeon in the company of California Volunteers.

Although Templeton and others of the family of Dr. George's second wife did not believe he ever practiced medicine very seriously, his professional card appeared in the first issue of the Tulare *County Record,* later the *Visalia Weekly Delta* in 1859, and ran in that paper continuously even after he moved to Porterville in 1876. He was one of the physicians who tried to save the life of John Shannon-editor of the *Delta*-from gunshot wounds to the body, suffered in a fight with a political rival, one William Governuer Morris, in 1860. On another occasion the doctor teamed up with a colleague to successfully perform a tracheotomy on a child with a grain of corn lodged in his throat.

The doctor had a brother, Dr. William H. George, an early pioneer near Bishop where he practiced medicine. In 1870-71 W. H. George was listed as a physician for the Tule River Indian Reservation near Porterville, and he also practiced in Kernville during the Indian troubles there. In 1890 he delivered a baby in Bishop-christened Horace Marden Albright-who was to become "the father" of Death Valley National Monument.

The versatile Dr. Samuel Gregg George was also a pioneer grower. With Dr. Reuben Matthews of Visalia he planted a vineyard east of Matthews' mill, which by 1859 had produced grapes from which Dr. George was able to present the editor of the *Delta* with a sample of wine. He also gave a Visalia farmer an olive tree which was still growing on the banks of Mill Creek 100 years later.

Whether or not the doctor was a "real" man of medicine, he was noted for an elixir he compounded from eucalyptus leaves. Probably liberally laced with laudanum, the tincture was effective in relieving rheumatism and other pains. According to Templeton, the old-timers of the day swore by it.

Like many another California miner, Dr. George became addicted to the search for precious metal and spent much time probing the foothills and mountains of Tulare County. He filed some of the first claims, in 1859, on magnesite deposits near Porterville. Mining of this mineral was to become an important industry, but not until 1900 on into the 1920's. The doctor and a man named Franklin had a four-stamp mill on the south fork of White River in Tulare County in 1858. He also filed on a galena deposit on the Wishon fork of the Tulare River.

That Dr. George was a gadabout is indicated by frequent mention of him in the newspapers of the day. Royal Porter Putnam, who was to become the founder of Porterville, was in 1860 a keeper of a Butterfield Overland Mail Station and recorded in his diary, "I had Dr. George and his partner stay with me last evening."

It was no surprise then that Dr. George was to become greatly interested in the Coso country and in the legend of the Lost Gunsight Mine. This legend grew out of the discovery of a piece of float silver brought out by one of the men who escaped from Death Valley in the winter of 1849-1850. Almost every historian who has written about Death Valley, the Amargosa, the Panamints and adjacent desert areas, has mentioned Dr. George and his experiences.

In 1875, the doctor wrote a letter-to either P. A. Chalfant, publisher of the *Inyo Register*, or to Thomas S. Harris, editor of the *Panamint News*-in which he reflected on Dr. French and his party who, 15 years earlier, had ventured into Death Valley shortly before George and his group made the trek. In part, he wrote:

"In the fall of 1860, through the efforts of the undersigned, a second party was got up at Visalia for the search . . . consisting of Dr. W. B. Lilly, William T. Henderson, Stephen Gregg, Henry O'Hara, Moses Thayer and the writer of this article." The letter told of his party following the route taken by Dr. French, leaving Visalia and traveling to the South Fork of the Kern River and Walker Pass, to Indian Wells, then to Little Lake and on to Darwin Springs and Darwin Canyon. They followed French's trail over

the Panamints and into Death Valley to Furnace Creek, passing the Salt Creek camp where the Jayhawkers and others had abandoned their wagons.

The letter further explained how they had spent three weeks, and about as many miles, from the old '49er camp where they found the paraphernalia left by those Argonauts. Three weeks should have given the George party ample time to do considerable exploring in Death Valley. The state mineralogist of that time, Henry Hanks, was to report that Dr. George found parts of a man's skeleton near one of the springs and a shallow grave. The latter contained remnants of calico indicating that the grave was that of a woman, possibly an Indian who had acquired apparel left by the whites, as there is no record of the death of a female member of the '49ers.

They went out of the valley, Dr. George recorded, by way of a "pass where Hunter & Co. are now working the Nellie Grant mine. We gave to the spring there the name of Marble Spring. I am informed that it is now called Emigrant Spring." After this they made their way to Wildrose Spring which Dr. George named, presumably for the wild roses he found growing there, but the color of the mountain in the canyon may well have reminded him of the wild roses that grew in his boyhood home in Ohio.

Dr. George records that on December 23 [1860] he and Henderson took some provisions and started in the direction of the Slate Range. On Christmas Day they were returning and came through Mesquite Flat. On the summit of a nearby mountain some miles from Wildrose, they came onto a "massive silvery lode about 25 feet thick" which they took to be an ore of silver. They packed some samples out and later had it assayed in Visalia, which determined it to be antimony sulphide with just enough silver to encourage Dr. George to return. This he did in 1861, at which time he staked more claims in the area.

On that return trip the party camped at Mesquite Flat, some ten miles south of Post Office Spring, that water source being immediately adjacent to the present-day site of Ballarat, a mining camp that flourished from 1897 until 1917. At their camp they

dug a well and struck good water at six feet. George found an Indian guide nearby and the two took off up a canyon he called Sheep Canyon, so named for the carcass of a dead mountain sheep he encountered. That canyon was later named Surprise Canyon.

Just how far up the canyon the duo went the doctor did not report. However, at one point he became suspicious of his guide, did an about-face, and returned to camp, marching the Indian ahead of him with his rifle at the ready.

That apprehensive hike was possibly aborted just short of where the gold and silver of Surprise Canyon brought forth Panamint City, a lusty and lawless mining camp of the 1870's. The life and times of Panamint City-a hell-camp of the first order-has been the subject of many a wild and woolly Western, both fiction and non-fiction. According to Dr. George, Captain John Lillard of his party is the one who named the Panamint Mountains. This contingency of prospectors formally organized the Telescope Mining District, staked numerous claims, and went back to Visalia with a quarter-ton of ore from the Christmas Gift Mine. Again it turned out to assay predominantly antimony.

Despite the tone of the assay report, Dr. George was convinced that at a greater depth the lode would turn to silver, and the Combination Gold & Silver Mining Company was formed in July of 1861 with a paper capital of $990,000.00. With Henderson in charge, a shaft was dug and a tunnel started. In 1863 the Indians, who had become increasingly surly, killed four miners while Henderson was on a trip to Visalia. When he tried to return, the Indians drove him off. Henderson returned with several whites and killed nine Indians, but did not attempt to reopen the mine.

Dr. George's letter of 1875 revealed that during his Slate Range trip in the 1860's with Henderson, they fell in with Manly and Alvord and 16 other men, and accompanied them to find the place where Alvord had picked up gold. George said he and Henderson left the large party where they found them, but not before Alvord pointed out to him a peak back of the Panamints near which he believed he had found gold. With Alvord and the large party were Asabel Bennett and a man named Twitchell. Alvord was to be unable

Indian George in his later years. It was he who initially led Dr. George into Surprise Canyon, but becoming suspicious of his guide, the doctor abandoned the trek and returned to camp with his gun at ready-and Indian George a safe distance in front. (Robert A. Cartter)

to find the gold, and Bennett and Twitchell left for San Bernardino to bring back supplies. They never returned, leaving Manly and Alvord to what fate they knew not.

Twitchell was to tell Manly, many years later, that he and Bennett had encountered snow on their march south, and believing that Manly and Alvord had starved or had made their way out of the desert, had left them to their fate.

Thanks to Dr. George, Manly and Alvord's destiny was not what the ungrateful Bennett might have expected.

"Thirty-six days after leaving Alvord and his party," Dr. George wrote in 1875, "in passing Indian Wells we found Alvord and Manly. They had lost their horses and were out of every article of provisions. Alvord was sick with an abcess [*sic*] on his thigh and Manly was sustaining himself and Alvord on jackrabbits. Our party, having enough bread to sustain the sick man until our arrival in Kingville, we put him on my riding horse and took him in. Alvord was afterward killed by a man named Jackson because he could not show him the rich gold lead near Panamint."

Dr. George was later to encounter a man who had Alvord's shotgun and a mule which he said he had bought from Jackson, with whom Alvord had gone prospecting in the Coast Range. Dr. George went searching for Alvord, and found a camp and a body with the top of the head blown off and the face badly mutilated. He brought back a knife and some clothing which were identified as belonging to Alvord. The record does not show that Jackson was ever charged or brought to justice.

Back in Visalia with samples of ore from the Christmas Gift Mine, Dr. George organized, in April of 1861, another company of his original party, but added six new names. Included were J. R. Bell, J. W. Rolf, William Waters and others. It was named the Rough & Ready Mining Company with A. H. Clark as president, Thomas Baker as secretary (later to become the founder of Bakersfield), and Dr. George as treasurer. One of the members was Dennis Searles for whom Searles Lake is named.

Heading back to the desert, they fell in with the party of Col.

H. P. Russ. They ventured on up Owens Valley, camped on the river south of Independence, and formed the Russ Mining District with the colonel as chairman and George as secretary. It was said to be the "first semblance of any form of government in Inyo County."

The mines in the Russ district opened by the party were the Union, no doubt so named by Dr. George, a loyal Union man, the Eclipse and the Ida, none of which turned out to be rich.

In 1863 the Visalia *Delta* reported: "Dr. George, here from Owens River, brings mineral which only wants the impress of the eagle upon it to make it the pure spelter."

In traveling in the Kern and Coso countries Dr. George was exposing himself to many rough characters whose sympathies were on the side of the Confederacy. Visalia was also a hotbed of Secessionism until the last two years of the Civil War. Old-timers in Visalia and Porterville, as well as members of George's family, believed the doctor had supplied intelligence to the military regarding the movements of the Secesh in Tulare, Kern River mines, and the Inyo country, encouraging the establishment of militia camps at Visalia, Camp Babbitt, and Camp Independence near the Owens River. These were manned by "the Boys in the Sky Blue Pants" who marched by way of the Hockett Trail over the mountains wherever the need was greatest. The most action was in the Owens River country where the Indians killed miners, travelers and ranchers alike. The soldiers, cavalrymen without mounts, wore out their boots chasing the redskins who were led by Joaquin Jim with the help of "George's Indian," as the doctor's guide came to be known. Dr. Samuel George treated the soldiers at Camp Babbitt, and his brother, William, who lived near Owensville, treated those at Independence.

In 1864, the desire of the Owens River people to shorten the way to the courthouse by breaking off from Tulare County and forming their own county became of concern. In July of 1863 a meeting was held at San Carlos, near present day Independence, at which time delegates were chosen to attend a Union meeting in Visalia. The following year, when the legislature was to be

Dr. Samuel Gregg George (center) and brethren from the local chapter of E Clampus Vitus pose together in Porterville, California, 1880. (courtesy Porterville Public Library).

-JEFF EDWARDS COLLECTION

Dr. Samuel Gregg George

petitioned for the formation of a county, Dr. George was invited to be the first county judge, but he declined the offer. The Tulare County offshoot, initially designed to be called Monache County, was eventually labeled Inyo.

Dr. George missed the strike in Surprise Canyon, and in 1874 he returned to what by then was a rip-roaring camp. It was too late, however, to locate a good claim, as every foot of ground had been staked out. He did work his old Combination claim for a while but to no avail. In 1896 that claim was relocated by Frank C. Kennedy who got George Montgomery to reopen it; Montgomery was to become an important backer in Skidoo and Rhyolite around 1905-1907. In 1914, when World War I roared into action, the claim finally paid off to the tune of a million dollars, but Dr. George was not around to profit.

Dr. George made many trips from Visalia to Porterville, where he moved in 1876, but it was a long ride and he was no longer a young man. He told his step-grandson (Sardis Templeton*) about an encounter he had had on the trail with "Pegleg" Smith and his Chaguanosos, the greatest horse thief gang that ever lived. George was returning from a trip to Inyo County, riding north of Poso Creek in Kern County. Pegleg's hangout was in nearby Cojo Gulch in the foothills of eastern Tulare County where he stockpiled stolen horses before the long drive across the mountains and desert. Here George met a man with a wooden leg who was driving several fine horses. For the doctor's horse and $60 to boot, the man proposed to exchange the finest animal in his string, a gelding. The doctor tried out the gelding and finding it to his liking, made the trade.

By that time the man with the horses had been joined by some Indian and half-breed colleagues, as rough a looking band as Dr. George had ever seen. Though no stranger to such types, the doctor believed himself in some jeopardy and took leave on his new horse, frequently glancing back over his shoulder. He rode

*Sardis Templeton was a newspaper editor in Porterville and Lindsay, Tulare County. After his retirement he wrote a biography of Thomas "Pegleg" Smith entitled *The Lame Captain*, published by Westernlore Press 1965.

briskly until dark, picketed his horse on a bald hill and retired to the brush to bed down for the night. He was not disturbed.

When he arrived next day at the Tule River station of the Butterfield Overland Mail, he was told that the man he had dealt with was indeed the notorious Pegleg Smith, and that there was a good chance the doctor would one day cross paths with the true owner of the horse he was now riding. Although he rode it for several years, no one ever claimed it.

Templeton was told by Dr. George that during his Death Valley and Panamint days he had seen a large rock with petroglyphs on it; Dr. George had referred to it as "the writing rock". He believed the symbols were hieroglyphs of a lost language. Templeton endeavored to find the rock or someone who knew of it, but he was unsuccessful. Although it weighed several tons, someone may have succeeded in mysteriously hauling it off to Southern California, where today it graces a suburban patio.

While he had indifferent success with his prospecting and mining ventures, Dr. George struck it rich in 1876 when he wooed and won the widow Sarah Bond Wilcox. Her husband, Sardis Wilcox, had done rather well farming on the lower Tule River where Success Dam rises today.

The couple moved to Alameda, but were soon back on the Tule homesteading 160 acres next to the Wilcox place. The Visalia *Delta* reported that the old boy, now in his 60's, was setting out citrus trees and experimenting with cotton, tobacco and mulberry trees, the latter to be used for the culture of silkworms.

He might have been able to liquidate the bonanza of the Widow Wilcox when he began scheming to appropriate the waters of the south fork of the Tule-which watered the Wilcox place and the lands of relatives-but Hermina Templeton, a Wilcox, had water rights on the river and she blew the whistle. He then tried to obtain water from the main river, building a couple miles of ditch and even a short flume. Nothing much came of this venture except to make his wife unhappy over the expenditure of her money.

The Georges built a small cottage on their homestead. When it caught fire and burned down, destroying (among other things) Dr. George's dentistry kit, they moved a house from old Vandalia to Mill Street in Porterville. Here they lived out their lives on income from his wife's estate and his small pension as a veteran of the Mexican War.

Dr. George never completely lost interest in mining. He did not take much part in the Silver Rush to Mineral King in Tulare County during the 1870's when Tom Fowler, a fiery Irishman, spent his cattle fortune trying to make a bonanza out of the Empire Mine. (Fowler sought to buy Ireland from Queen Victoria and give it to the Irish.) George had a claim or two there but they were not productive. He and a partner bought the Magnesia Works in Porterville but it too was not successful. His family said that at the age of 90 he tried to join a party headed for a mineral strike in Mono County.

His old age was far from dull. He was always a gregarious fellow, member of the Odd Fellows Lodge and active in meeting of veterans of the Mexican and Civil Wars. He was no teetotaler. On occasion he would come home from late hours at the saloon on the waterwagon-the crew would dump him off on the front porch, from which he would be retrieved by Sarah and such female relatives as happened to be staying at the house.

In 1874 he was called in as a judge in a dispute in an election in the Mineral King Mining District.

He remained a tough hombre. He was well into his sixties when the Visalia *Delta* reported that while hunting on the plains west or Visalia he encountered a wild bull so closely that he could not bring his gun into play. He grabbed its horns and swung his body along side the bull's to avoid being gored or trampled. He hung on until two vaqueros half a mile away noticed his plight and rode to his rescue.

Indian George, who became George Hanson, lived to a ripe old age. Sardis Templeton recalls reading a story, some 50 years ago, in the *Los Angeles Times* that told of the aged Indian George still alive past his 100th birthday. He supposedly had witnessed-

when a boy of nine years-the plight of the desperate '49ers and their escape from Death Valley. Templeton found the old man, but he could no longer speak English and was so deaf it was impossible to gain any information from him through Shoshone interpreters. Nothing in Death Valley is named for Dr. George, but George's Creek in Owens Valley is said to have been named for "George's Indian."

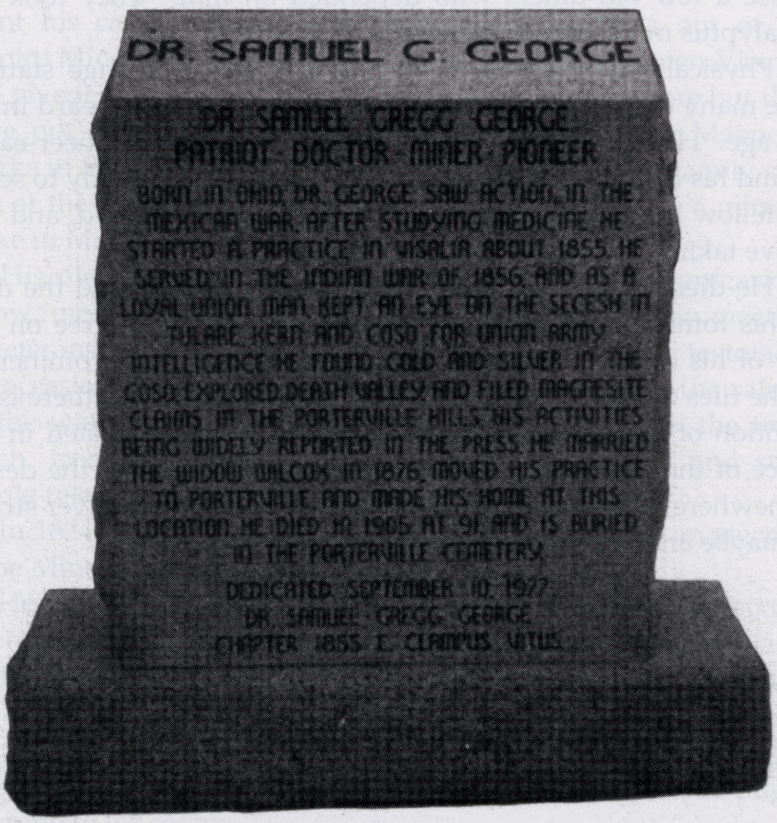
In his old age the doctor practiced medicine very little except to see a few old-timers who depended on him. They took his eucalyptus medicine for rheumatism.

Physically he was not a big man, being of average stature. Like many of his male contemporaries he wore a long beard in his old age. He was in many ways a typical California Pioneer-eager to find his fortune, courageous, loyal to his country, ready to serve his fellow man, bringing succor to the ill and oppressed, and not above taking a drink for the sake of conviviality.

He died in April of 1905. The cemetery records and the date on his tombstone in the Porterville Cemetery don't agree on the day of his death. Although his name had appeared prominently in the files of the Visalia newspapers for half a century, there is no mention of his death and no record of it has been located in the office of the county records. Maybe he is out there in the desert somewhere, wandering around in search of a gold or silver strike, or maybe another rich widow.

His name will live on in Tulare County as long as there is a chapter of E Clampus Vitus, for the local chapter is named after him.

Dr. Samuel Gregg George: soldier, prospector, physician, pioneer. What say the brethren?


DR. SAMUEL G. GEORGE
DR. SAMUEL GREGG GEORGE
PATRIOT · DOCTOR · MINER · PIONEER
BORN IN OHIO DR. GEORGE SAW ACTION IN THE MEXICAN WAR. AFTER STUDYING MEDICINE HE STARTED A PRACTICE IN VISALIA ABOUT 1855. HE SERVED IN THE INDIAN WAR OF 1856 AND AS A LOYAL UNION MAN KEPT AN EYE ON THE SECESH IN TULARE, KERN AND COSO FOR UNION ARMY INTELLIGENCE. HE FOUND GOLD AND SILVER IN THE COSO; EXPLORED DEATH VALLEY AND FILED MAGNESITE CLAIMS IN THE PORTERVILLE HILLS. HIS ACTIVITIES BEING WIDELY REPORTED IN THE PRESS. HE MARRIED THE WIDOW WILCOX IN 1876, MOVED HIS PRACTICE TO PORTERVILLE AND MADE HIS HOME AT THIS LOCATION. HE DIED IN 1905 AT 91 AND IS BURIED IN THE PORTERVILLE CEMETERY.
DEDICATED SEPTEMBER 10, 1977
DR. SAMUEL GREGG GEORGE
CHAPTER 1855 E CLAMPUS VITUS

Lasting tribute to Dr. Samuel Gregg George is found in this monument in Porterville, Calif. It was erected in 1977 by the E Clampus Vitus.

Addendum

ADDENDUM

Joseph L. Doctor's 1988 Keepsake on Dr. Samuel Gregg George was selected for reprint by the Death Valley '49ers because of the historical significance of Dr. George and the quality of Joseph Doctor's Keepsake. George was one of the early explorers of Death Valley who visited and named some of its prominent locations, almost discovered the Surprise Canyon silver deposits which started the stampede to Panamint City, and located the first claim (Christmas Gift) in the Death Valley region. George sought silver at the Christmas Gift and failed. It wasn't until approximately ten years after Dr. George's death that the area of the old Christmas Gift yielded a bonanza in antimony. Further research into Death Valley's antimony mining and documentation via a Keepsake or other booklet would be a worthy history project. We have provided the following table, map, and pictures to help you focus on George's exploits in the Death Valley region and the saga of his Christmas Gift.

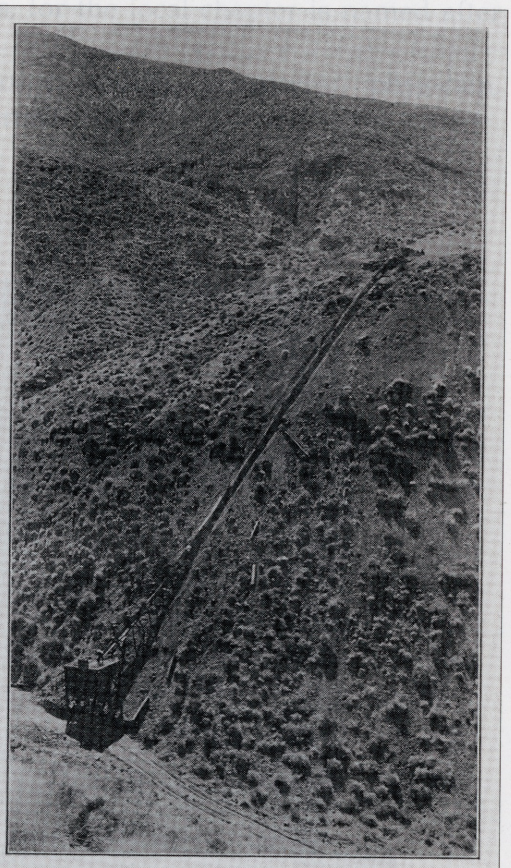


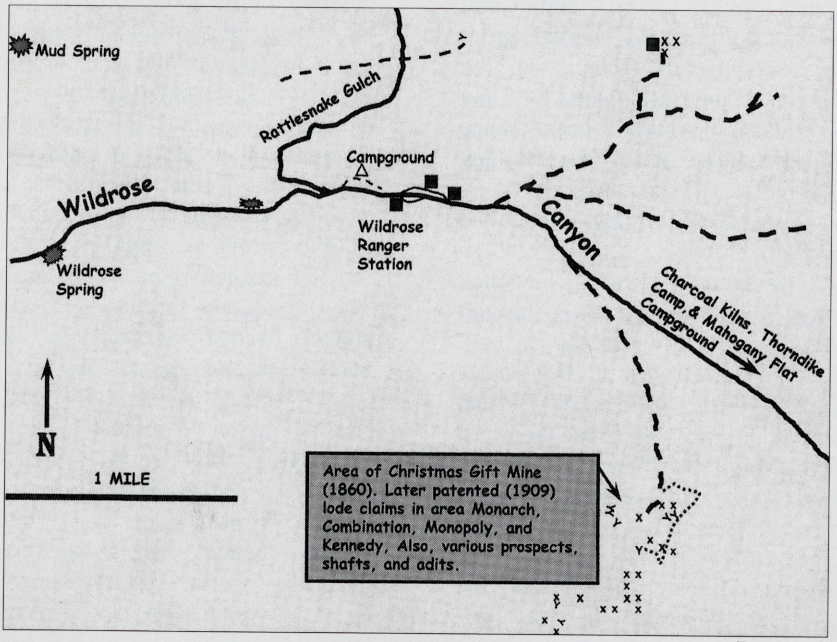
Photo No. 27. Burro train, ore chute and ore bin at Wildrose Cañon Antimony Mine.

(CA State Mineralogist)

Kenneth E. Lengner
Jean V. Pickard
Death Valley '49ers
Publications Committee
2007

Photo No. 28 Camp at Wildrose Cañon, showing trucks used for hauling antimony ore toTrona.

(CA State Mineralogist)


Mud Spring
Rattlesnake Gulch
Campground
Wildrose
Wildrose Ranger Station
Wildrose Spring
Canyon
Charcoal Kilns, Thorndike Camp, & Mahogany Flat Campground
N
1 MILE
Area of Christmas Gift Mine (1860). Later patented (1909) lode claims in area Monarch, Combination, Monopoly, and Kennedy, Also, various prospects, shafts, and adits.

(Lengner)

PANAMINT NEWS: TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 1875

PANAMINT NEWS.

OUR EARLY HISTORY.

Prospectors of '59 and '60-The Mythical "Gun-Sight Lead" the Objective Point.

ROSE SPRINGS, INYO CO. CAL., MARCH 1, '75.

EDITOR NEWS: Having been informed that you were desirous of obtaining a true history of the early pioneers of this part of the country, I will give you a reliable historical statement:

The First Expedition in 1859.

Was composed of some fifteen persons, headed by Dr. Darwin French, John Lillard, and Capt. Robert Bailey, and started from Butte county, in search of the famous "Gun-Sight lead." They went through Walker's Pass, thence to Little Lake, from whence they diverged to the east, making many locations and forming the Coso District. (Coso, in the Indian language, means "fire"). They then started, directly east, going through Darwin Canyon, which they named in honor of Darwin French. After leaving the mouth of Darwin Canyon they crossed to the mouth of what is known as Towne's Pass into Death Valley. Towne's Pass is about fifteen miles north of the mouth of Rose Canyon. They went on to Furnace Creek, explored on the south side of Death Valley, about as far south as your town of Panamint, returning through to Coso by the same route they went out. Thus ended their first expedition.

In the fall of 1860, through the efforts of the undersigned,

A Second Party

Was got up at Visalia, for another search after the "Gun-sight," consisting of the following persons: Dr. W. B. Lilley, William T. Henderson, Stephen Gregg, Henry O'Hara, Moses Thayer and the writer of this article. Leaving Visalia, we followed the track of the French party until arriving in Death Valley. We camped about three miles from where the emigrants deserted their wagons in 1850. There we found the rusted remains of many log chains and wagon irons. After spending some three weeks in that camp we came through a pass where Hunter & Co. are now working the Nellie Grant Mine. We gave to the spring there the name of Marble Spring. I am informed that it is now called Emigrant Spring. Then we came to this place. Our animals needed rest, we made camp here and started prospecting.

That was on or about the 15th of December, 1860. On the 23rd Henderson and myself, taking two to three days' provisions, started down in the direction of the Slate Range. Returning on the 25th, we came up through Mesquite Flat and up Windy

Canyon, crossing over to Rose Canyon, and after crossing the summit,

Discovered the Christmas Gift Lode,

so named because of the day. After this we found a series of leads in the same locality. There seems to be a difference of opinion as to which is really Windy Canyon. I can only say that I gave the first canyon south of Rose Springs the name of Windy Canyon. Any one doubting the appropriateness of the name should pass up there and enjoy the gentle zephyrs.

On the 16th day of January, 1861, our party camped at Mesquite Flat, ten miles north of Post Office Springs. There we sunk a well, finding good, sweet water at a depth of six feet. I there procured and Indian guide, and started up a canyon leading to your town. I passed up for a distance of (as near as I can recollect) about five miles, going up an Indian trail on the north side of the canyon until I got above the falls. At a point of rocks on the right hand side, some distance above the falls, I found where a mountain sheep had fallen from the high bluff above and for the want of a better name, called it

"Sheep Canyon."

(It is known to the world now as Surprise Canyon, and will continue to be so called as far as I am concerned.) My guide's actions (I was just a trifle suspicious of Indians at that time) caused me to march Mr. Indian back to camp in front of me, which prevented me from going up as high as where the embryo city of Panamint now stands. Our Party returned home by way of Darwin Canyon, Little Lake, etc.

I would here state, to the best of my memory, that the Panamint range of mountains was named by John Lillard of French's party. Our party named the high peak, between here and Panamint, Telescope Peak.

In my next I will give you many more matters which will be interesting, at least to old prospectors.

S. G. GEORGE

VOL. I. PANAMINT CAL. TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 1875

OUR EARLY HISTORY.

ROSE SPRINGS, March 18th, 1875.
EDITOR NEWS: In my last, time prevented me from giving you some interesting items in regard to what is known as

The Alvord Lead.

I stated that W. T. Henderson and myself made a trip off in the Slate Range country. While on that trip we fell in with Wm. Alvord and a Mr. Manley of San Jose, also a party of sixteen men from Los Angeles in search of his (Alvord's) leads. We left the party where we found them; but before leaving the party Alvord tried to show me where his lost lead was. From where we stood, he pointed out the middle one of the high mountain peaks back of Panamint, and he described the lead as being within five miles from said peak. Thirty-six days after parting with Alvord and party, in Passing Indian Wells, we found Alvord and Manley; they had lost their horses, were out of every article of provisions, Alvord sick with an abscess in his thigh, and Manley sustaining himself and Alvord on jack rabbits. Our party having enough bread to sustain the sick man until our arrival at Kingsville, we put him on a riding horse and took him in. Alvord was afterwards killed by a man by the name of Jackson, because he could not show him the rich gold lead near Panamint.

To continue my narrative. In April our party prepared to return to this part of the county to continue prospecting. In addition to our first party was added six more men (J. R. Bell, J. W. Rolf, Wm. Waters and others). After leaving Visalia we fell in at Walker's Pass with the New World Mining and Exploring Company, the same being under the direction of Colonel W. P. Russ. A proposition was made to consolidate two companies, which was accepted. We then proceeded on our way to Granite Springs, in Coso, when one half of the party came on here and the rest went to Owens River. The party coming here proceeded to organize the old Telescope Peak Mining District. After locating a number of leads they joined the other party on Owens River.

Before leaving this place to follow the party to Owens River, I would state that after returning a company was formed, known as the **Combination Gold and Silver Mining Company,** to work the mines in this district. Several attempts were made to develop the mines, and a tunnel was run a distance of one hundred and fifty-five feet, but the Indians becoming trouble-some and we having had several of our men killed, the mine was abandoned for

the time being. The names of the parties killed were John A. White, Ed. Turm and two others, the names of which I do not know.

To return to our party at the Owens River. We made the first discovery of mines ever made there. We formed a district and gave it the name of the Russ District, in honor of Colonel Russ. Among the discoveries made, were first, the Old Union Lead, the Eclipse, and many more, the names of which I leave for my old comrades to give, whose minds are not impaired by old age. After prospecting for several weeks and naming places, we returned home and organized the old Union Gold and Silver Mining Company.

I will state here that I gave the name Inyo to the Range of mountains running from the foot of Owens Great Lake, on the east side, up to the White Mountains. The name Haiwe was given to the Springs between Big and Little Lakes. Haiwe is the Indian word for dove.

The history of Inyo County, up to and since its organization, is too well known for me to continue this article further, and Indian wars in this county have already become a matter of history.

I hope, however, that some one more competent than myself will take up this matter and bring the history up to the present.

Respectfully, S. G. GEORGE

Dr. Samuel Gregg George and Related Events in the Death Valley Area	
Date	Event
April 20, 1860	Russ Mining District formed (western Inyo Mountains.). Russ was chairman of meeting and George was secretary. Others located the Union, Eclipse, and Ida claims.
1860	George party explored Death Valley and visited the site of Jayhawker camp (Burnt Wagons Point). Some wagon parts were reported along with the possibility of a calico dress. Chalfant wrote somewhat dubious lines that Dr. George found skeletons and Native American paintings of the '49ers.
Late 1860	Passed Nellie Grant mine, Emigrant Spring, northern Panamint Mountains.
Dec. 1860	Dr. George party arrived at Wildrose Spring (he named), in the Panamint Mountains.
Dec. 23	Dr. George and William T. Henderson went to prospect in the Slate Range.
Dec. 25	Returning from prospecting, Dr. George and Wm. Henderson discovered a "silver" prospect and called it the "Christmas Gift." Staked claims. T19S, R44E.
Jan. 1861	Prospects up Surprise Canyon with guide Indian George Hansen (aka *Bah-vanda-sava-nu-kee* [Boy who runs away]). Close to discovering silver lode which made Panamint City famous.
Late Jan. 1861	George party rescued William Lewis Manley and Alvord who were out of provisions. They were found at Indian Wells in Slate Range.
Late Jan. 1861	Returned to Visalia for assay of ore samples… still stibnite (antimony and sulphur) plus a little silver.
April 1861	• George party returned to Panamints and staked more claims. • Climbed and named Telescope Peak. • Helped organize Telescope Mining District. • Ore assayed at San Francisco with same result… stibnite with traces of silver.
July 24, 1861	Combination Gold and Silver Mining Co. formed. Dr. George was President.
Summer 1861	While prospecting in Death Valley, Jackson killed Alvord. Dr. George met Jackson and recognized Alvord's shotgun. Dr. George returned to Alvord's camp and found a body with head blown off.
1861-3	Superintendent Wm. Henderson and six men sank shaft and tunneled at Christmas Gift prospect.

April 1863	• Panamint Shoshone killed the four miners at Christmas Gift mine. • Henderson returned from Visalia supply trip and beaten back by Shoshone. • Henderson organized "posse," returned and killed 9 Shoshone.
Aug. 27, 1863	Newspaper, *Delta*, article: "*Dr. George, here* (San Carlos) *from Owens River, brings a mineral which only wants the impress of the eagle upon it to make it pure silver.*"
1863	Mine not reopened due to ongoing troubles with Native Americans
Late 1874	Over 10 years later, Dr. George arrived at Panamint City silver boom.
Dec. 1874	Dr. George levied assessment on Combination stock to reopen Christmas Gift.
March 1875	Dr. George wrote articles "*Our Early History*" for Panamint News.
April 1875	Wm. Henderson and Daniel McCowley patented 160-acres in Tulare County.
Nov. 1875	Dr. George patented 160-acres in Tulare County, next to Henderson.
Jan. 1876	After over a year of mining, not enough silver, Christmas Gift closed…again.
1876	Dr. George struck paydirt when he married rich widow Sarah Bond Wilcox.
Aug. 1882	Frank Beltic recorded notice of location for "Original Antimony Mine in Rose Spring Mining District 2 ½ miles southeast of Rose Spring AKA Inyo Antimony Mine." The same day, the same location was filed on by four others.
Jan. 1889	William Hannigan (sp.) and Joe Danielson relocated and filed on mines in same general area as old Christmas Gift.
Jan. 1890	*Inyo Independent* reported that the mines were bonded to mining speculator G. A. Smith.
1893	The CA State Mineralogist reported that 11 claims were located on deposits of stibnite (antimony-sulfide) 3-miles south of Wildrose Spring. The claims were owned by J. Danielson, C. Anthony, et al. No production was reported. Deposits north of Wildrose are believed to have opened around this time.
Jan. 1896	Frank C. Kennedy filed three notices of location for seven old mines located southeast of Wildrose Spring. (Monopoly, Monarch, and Combination)
Jan. 1897	Frank C. Kennedy located the Kennedy claim in the same locale as the aforementioned.
1900	George Montgomery, E.M. Dineen, and C.B Fleming bought the antimony mines from Kennedy with ore shipment made in September 1890.

ADDENDUM

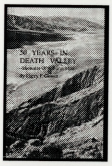
Nov. 1901	*Engineering and Mining Journal* reported development work at the mines.
Apr. 1902	A forfeiture notice appeared in the *Inyo Independent* regarding the Combination, Monarch, Monopoly, and Kennedy mines.
1903	Mines probably idle.
April 1905	Dr. Samuel Gregg George died.
1907	Gold-silver-lead strike excitement in the area of the mines.
June 1908	C. B. Fleming, J. S. Stotler, A. W. Eibeshutz, and George A. Smith filed a record of patent (83128/Survey 4531) for the Kennedy lode mining claim.
June 1909	Frank Kennedy, J. S. Stotler, and A. W. Eibeshutz filed a record of patent (83129/Survey 4530) for the Monarch, Combination, and Monopoly lode mining claims.
Aug. 1914	WWI underway and antimony prices skyrocketed. Stotler, Eibeshutz, and Smith sold the Monarch, Combination, and Monopoly lode mining claims to Leslie C. Mott who formed Western Metals Company.
May 1915	Mott transferred title to Western Metals Company.
1915	CA State Mineralogist Report XV, reporting on Western Metals Co. mines: "Mined intermittently since the early 90s," "*Taken over by the present company January, 1915 [?], and "The ore averaging 35% or over in antimony."* Also, it was reported that 30 Mexican laborers were at work hand drilling ("hand steel") in open cuts and sorting ore from old dumps and that five 2 ½ ton Moreland trucks hauled ore to Trona whence it was shipped to the company smelter in San Pedro. Lingenfelter reported that the ore was hauled from the diggings and down a steep hill to an ore bin by a mule train owned by Frank Montgomery. The antimony vein has been described as being in schist and varying from a few inches to over a foot wide.
1916	Antimony prices dropped. Lingenfelter reported that: "*The old mine turned out about $3,000 worth of ore a day until all work stopped in the spring of 1916…", "By then, Mott had shipped roughly 4,000 tons of ore", and "…proven its worth as a $1 million bonanza."* (Other closure dates have been reported as 1918 and 1919)
1919-1970	Linda Greene reported sporadic mine operation and various mine owners during this period.

References:

a) Greene, Linda W. and Latschar, John A. *"Historic Resource Study, A History of Mining in Death Valley National Monument, Volume I of II, Part 1 of 2,"* National Park Service, 1979.
b) Lingenfelter, Richard E., *"Death Valley and the Amargosa, A Land of Illusion,"* 1985.
c) CA State Mineralogist, *Reports XII, XV, XXII, and XXXIV*, CA State Mining Bureau, 1893-94, 1915-16, 1926, and 1938, respectively.
d) Chalfant, W. A., *The Story of Inyo*, Chalfant Press, 1975. and, of course:
e) Doctor, Joseph E., *"Dr. Samuel Gregg George, Death Valley Explorer 1860-61"* Keepsake 28, Death Valley '49ers, 1988.

The Death Valley '49ers

Books



50 Years In Death Valley, Memoirs of a Borax Man by Harry P. Gower
Death Valley '49ers publication # 09 **164 pages in Soft Cover**

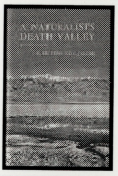
"A collection of reminiscence and anecdotes of the Death Valley area between 1909 and 1960. Mr. H. P. (Harry) Gower was not only a resident but had a major influence on the course of events in the region during those years." - *Dean Lemon, Life Director, The Death Valley '49ers*

"Harry P. Gower was not just a spectator but often a prime mover in events in Death Valley. Surveying for railroads, routing claim jumpers, and managing a pioneer resort hotel."
- L. Burr Belden, Past President, The Death Valley '49ers

The Lost Death Valley '49er Journal of Louis Nusbaumer by George Koenig
Death Valley '49ers publication # 11 **84 pages in Soft Cover**

Louis Nusbaumer (1819-1878), was a German immigrant that left New York City in March, 1849, traveled to Independence, Mo., and there began his trip overland with William Lewis Manly and John Rogers to California.

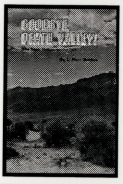
This is the story of his journey, which was kept in two small notebooks, recovered in 1966, illustrated throughout with drawings, photos and maps. Made available here by the Death Valley '49ers Organization.



A Naturalist's Death Valley by Dr. Edmund C. Jaeger
Death Valley '49ers publication # 05 76 pages in Soft Cover

A Naturalist's Death Valley is a primer to help the thousands of admiring visitors to Death Valley National Park get a general picture of wild flowers, trees, shrubs, reptiles, birds, insects, mammals, fossils and Native Americans.

Dr. Edmund C. Jaeger was a nationally known naturalist who authored many books on the flora & fauna of California.

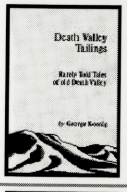


Goodbye, Death Valley! The Tragic 1849 Jayhawker Trek by L. Burr Belden
Death Valley '49ers publication # 04 **68 pages in Soft Cover**

This work traces the largest of several parties who became mired in Death Valley during December 1849. Two members of this party, Jayhawkers, kept diaries of their trip which have been preserved.

They were consulted by the author along with a scrapbook and numerous letters kept by the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

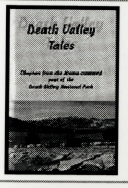
This work also includes a list of Jayhawkers.



Death Valley Tailings Rarely Told Tales of old Death Valley by George Koenig
Death Valley '49ers publication # 13 132 pages in Soft Cover & 144 pages First Edition Hard Cover

Recaptured within these pages are stories that will help you to turn back the clock, and relive the historic past. This is a definitely different collection of Death Valley tales. Each provides a more complete picture of one of the most fascinating areas and eras of the Old West.

Subjects discussed include missing 1849 Death Valley Argonauts, gold and silver hunters, explores, map makers, and inscriptions left on rock.



Death Valley Tales, chapters from the drama-crammed past of the Death Valley National Park by Ten Western Authors
Death Valley '49ers publication # 03 **74 pages in Soft Cover**

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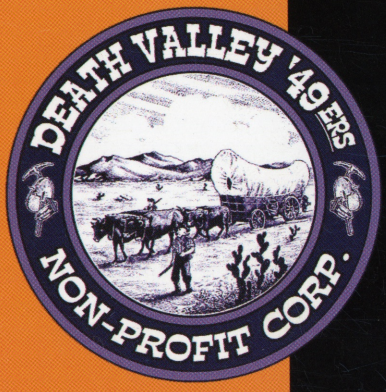
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